

out of four hundred and could have formed the majority if they had united. Actually, however, some Laborites voted with the Cadets, and some could not make up their minds and abstained from voting. Thus, the Cadets dominated the Duma through a weak and unstable majority formed from their own group, the rightists, and splinter votes of the Labor Group. The policy of the Cadets was expressed by the slogan: Spare the Duma! In practice, this meant abstaining from action that could irritate Stolypin or the Black Hundreds.

Two weeks passed. The government ignored the Duma. The Cadets were using extreme caution and the Laborites were reluctantly following them; the Duma was rapidly losing the sympathy of the public. Suddenly Stolypin announced that he intended to present the Duma with an outline of his program. The name of Stolypin was so closely associated with a regime of gallows that discussion of his program in the Duma was bound to lead to a clash between the left and the government. The Cadets therefore proposed that the Duma refrain from discussing the address of the Prime Minister. The Laborites accepted the proposal; the S-D rejected it.

After Stolypin's speech, businesslike in form but contemptuous of the elected representatives of the people, the spokesman of the S-D group mounted the rostrum. He was a young man, tall and lean, with unusually handsome features, a resonant voice, and a noticeable Caucasian accent. This was the first public appearance of Irakli Tseretelli.

"Many people," he said, "will be surprised by the silence of the grave with which this assembly has met the declaration of the government that dissolved the First Duma and introduced field-martial courts. This silence, however, expresses the depth of your indignation. No outcries, no roars would be adequate to express the feelings of the people toward this government. . . . We do not ask the government to yield to the will of the people. We know it will yield to force alone. We ask the people's representatives to build up the necessary force."

Tseretelli became the most popular speaker in the Duma. Although he belonged to the Menshevik wing of the party, the Bolsheviks recognized him as the party's mouthpiece. Who could have suspected then that, a decade later, the same hall in the Tauride Palace would hear Tseretelli speaking in the first and last session of the Constituent Assembly, challenging Lenin with the same passion, in the name of the same democratic principles?

The Cadets continued their efforts to convince the Tsar that he should hand over power to them. The Black Hundreds argued before the Tsar that the moderate liberals in the Duma were no better than the extreme left.